

# **Roma settlements and poverty in Slovakia: Different policy approaches of the state, local governments, and NGOs**

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## **Abstract**

According to the official censuses, there are approximately 90,000 Roma people in Slovakia, although experts have estimated the actual number at between 350,000 and 500,000. Various international organisations and institutions have recently noted that widespread discrimination against the Roma is found in employment, education, health services, housing and loan practices. Many of their settlements lack formal infrastructure, access to drinking water, and proper sewage systems. Poverty among the Roma is very high, and the state has been failing in the implementation of its official anti-poverty policies. Therefore, other stakeholders, especially local governments and NGOs, have become much more important in this field. The main research question is, whether other stakeholders replaced the state in the field of anti-poverty policies linked to the marginalized Roma communities. Taking into account recent development as well as the present state, it is assumed that both NGOs and local governments have significantly replaced the state in this field, and in contrast, it is assumed that their approaches vary greatly, and therefore their outcomes differ significantly in terms of impact. For the research purposes quantitative data (obtained from various authorities as well as by means of field research), and qualitative data (e.g. content analysis of different strategic documents and implemented projects) are used. In addition to an analysis based on quantitative data, the article contains a few cases in order to support the interpretation of quantitative data and to point out the cases of adequate and inadequate practices.

**KEYWORDS:** Roma, Slovakia, Roma settlements, poverty, anti-poverty policies, local governments, NGOs

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## **Introduction**

The discussion focused on marginalized communities that are characterized by an intergenerationally reproduced culture of poverty (Lewis 1969), as well as by other negative socio-pathologic features is traditionally linked to the Roma and so-called “Roma problem” in Slovakia. The long-term cohabitation of the Roma and the majority population in Slovakia has led to the state of divided communities (Scheffel 2013), where an antagonistic tolerance model (Hayden 2002) accompanied by mutual latent tensions is applied. Taking into account the existence of tradition of paternalistic approach from the side of the majority population towards the Roma and “their issues”, lack of mutual cultural understanding and frequent negatively oriented reports about the Roma in mass media, there is no surprise that there are many incorrect stereotypes, prejudices, and misunderstandings in the abovementioned cohabitation.

Due to attitudes of central governments of the CEE countries towards the Roma before 1989, there was only limited research in the field of the Roma issues. However, since the collapse of communist regimes in these countries, research activities increased significantly (cf. Room 1995; Atkinson 1998; Ringold 2000; Emigh & Szelényi 2001). Concerning research in Slovakia, although some research in the field of Roma issues had been conducted earlier (e.g. Horváthová 1964), issues linked to the Roma minority and their lifestyle recently employed many researchers from the field of anthropology, sociology, political science, economy, human geography and history (cf. Jurová 1993; Vašečka 2002a, Vašečka et al. 2002, Scheffel & Mušinka 2003; Radičová 2004; Matlovič 2005; Džambazovič 2007; Jakoubek & Hirt 2008; Želinský 2010, 2011; Matlovičová et al. 2012; Mušinka et al. 2014). Despite intensive research activities that were realized in the previous two decades, many unanswered questions regarding the Roma, their culture, life strategies, etc. remain. One of the most sensitive issues linked to the Roma problem in Slovakia is poverty in the Roma settlements, and searching for sufficient solutions that could lead to the improvement of the current state. On this matter, it must be stressed that there is a lack of evaluation studies focused on the utilisation of different approaches of the state and other stakeholders, e.g. local governments or NGOs, within relevant policy making. From this perspective, the article tries to contribute to a discussion aimed at both the positive and negative impacts of these different approaches.

## **On the methods**

Various international organisations and institutions recently noted that a widespread discrimination against the Roma had been found in employment, education, health services, housing and loan practices in Slovakia. Many of their settlements lack formal infrastructure, access to drinking water, and proper sewage systems. The poverty of the Roma is very high (Želinský 2010), and the state has been failing in the implementation of its official anti-poverty policies. Therefore, other stakeholders, especially local governments and NGOs, have become much more important in this field.

The paper focuses on the main question, whether other stakeholders replaced the state in the field of anti-poverty policies linked to the marginalized Roma communities. Taking into account recent developments as well as present state, it is assumed that both

NGOs and local governments have significantly replaced the state in this field, and on the other hand, it is assumed that their approaches vary widely and, therefore, their outcomes differ significantly in terms of impact.

To support the idea on failing of the state, a hypothesis is proposed that the grant resources from the European Social Fund for the Social Inclusion of Roma in Slovakia be reallocated according to the quality of the submitted projects, and not according to the local state and local needs. On this matter we are focusing on the question whether decisions on allocation of grants aimed at social inclusion of the Roma people within the measures 2.1 and 2.2 of 2007 – 2013 Operational Programme “Employment and social inclusion”<sup>1</sup> at a local (LAU-2) level in Slovakia in fact correspond to the local living condition characteristics. Living conditions are represented by a set of selected characteristics describing the Roma’s access to basic infrastructure, education, healthcare, and institutional approach to solving the so-called Roma problem at a local level. The aim of this part of our study is not to evaluate the effectiveness of funds allocation<sup>2</sup> (which is not even possible at this time as the implementation of all projects has not yet finished); we only study to what extent decisions on the allocation of grants reflect the living conditions of the impoverished Roma.

As the analysis is based on spatial data, spatial econometric techniques are used in order to answer the research question. In this study, a spatial Durbin model (SDM) given by Eq. (1) is employed.<sup>3</sup> The rationale behind this model is to incorporate spatial effects working through the dependent variable and spatial effects working through the explanatory variables (Želinský 2014):

$$\mathbf{y} = \mathbf{1}_n \alpha + \mathbf{X} \boldsymbol{\beta} + \rho \mathbf{W} \mathbf{y} + \mathbf{W} \boldsymbol{\gamma} + \varepsilon \quad (1)$$

where

- $\mathbf{y}$  is  $n$ -by-1 vector of observations of resources sums allocated at a local level (natural logarithms are used),
- $\mathbf{1}_n$  is  $n$ -by-1 vector of ones with the associated scalar parameter  $\alpha$ ,
- $\mathbf{X}$  is  $n$ -by- $q$  matrix of observations on the explanatory variables (see the next section with the data description) with the associated vector parameter  $\boldsymbol{\beta}$ ,
- $\mathbf{W}$  is  $n$ -by- $n$  non-stochastic spatial weight matrix specifying the spatial dependence among municipalities. In accordance with LeSage and Fischer (2008),  $\mathbf{W}$  is row-standardised (ensuring that all weights are between 0 and 1, and the sum of weights in each row is one) and based on the nearest neighbours with  $k = 6$ . When municipality

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1 *Measure 2.1*: Supporting the social inclusion of persons at risk of social exclusion or the socially excluded through the development of care services with special regard to marginalised Roma communities.

*Measure 2.2*: Promoting equal opportunities in access to the labour market and supporting the integration of disadvantaged groups in the labour market with special regard to marginalised Roma communities.

2 See e.g. Hurrell et al. (2012) for the discussion providing evaluation of the ESF contribution to improving the living conditions of the Roma in Slovakia; similar studies have been performed also at a European level (Di Nardo and Koncokova 2010, European Commission 2011).

3 All estimations, calculations, and graphical outputs were performed in an R environment (R Core Team 2012) using libraries `spdep` (Bivand et al. 2013) and `rgdal` (Keitt et al. 2013).

$j$  is a neighbour of municipality  $i$ ,  $W_{ij} = 1/6$ , and  $W_{ij} = 0$  otherwise. The diagonal elements of  $\mathbf{W}$  are set to zero by convention,

$\mathbf{W}\mathbf{y}$  is  $n$ -by-1 spatial lag vector of  $\mathbf{y}$  with associated scalar spatial dependence parameter (parameter of the first-order spatial autoregressive process)  $\rho$ , and is assumed to lie within the interval  $(-1, 1)$ . In our model, we assume that  $0 < \rho < 1$ , which indicates that amounts allocated at the municipal level are positively related to amounts allocated to neighbouring municipalities,

$\mathbf{W}\mathbf{X}$  is  $n$ -by- $q$  matrix of the spatially lagged explanatory variables with associated vector parameter  $\gamma$ ,

$\varepsilon$  is  $n$ -by-1 normally distributed, constant variance disturbance term,  $\varepsilon \sim N(\mathbf{0}, \sigma_\varepsilon^2 \mathbf{I}_n)$ .

Furthermore, various supporting quantitative data (obtained from various authorities as well as by means of field research), and qualitative data (e.g. content analysis of different strategic documents and implemented projects) are used. Moreover, the description of a few cases is used in order to support the interpretation of quantitative data and to point out the cases of adequate and inadequate practices.

## **Roma on the territory of Slovakia and their settlements**

The first Roma groups came on the territory of Slovakia approximately at the turn of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, and they lived on the social periphery in the Hungarian Kingdom for several centuries. Due to their nomadic style of life, they settled in the southern part of this territory, because the northern parts were rather hilly and colder (Horváthová 1964; Jurová 2002a; Matlovič 2005). Significant legal regulation regarding their lifestyle and behaviour was enacted in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Some regulations were enacted in order to facilitate assimilation of the Roma in the majority population. In that period, the Roma communities could be found almost throughout the whole territory of present Slovakia. The 20<sup>th</sup> century was very turbulent from the Roma's perspective: repeated forced resettlements, open official discrimination from the state, forced attempts to assimilate them into the majority population, cultural shocks accompanied with forced settlement, economic shocks linked to forced "changes" of their lifestyles and consequential deepening of their poverty that escalated after 1989 – this is a brief and incomplete list of different social phenomena which the Roma had to cope with (Jurová 2000; Matlovič 2005; Kumanová et al. 2006; Matlovičová et al. 2012). Despite these complications, the overall number of the Roma increased significantly (Table 1, Figure 1).

After WWI, the state in newly established Czechoslovakia changed its attitude and several laws were approved in order to regulate the lives of members of this minority, e.g. regulation focused on their wandering. Through new legislation, the state considered them *a priori* criminals, leading to the creation of fingerprint evidence of the Roma minority members by the state police in the mid-1920s. During WWII, the Slovak Republic approved several racist laws and special labour camps for the Roma were established. The end of WWII was connected with the abolishment of such camps, but the state led by the Communist Party began an assimilation of the Roma. One of the strongest policy tools was Act No. 74/1958 Coll. on the Permanent Settlement of Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic People. Furthermore, the state started with incentives for the Roma women in

order to undergo sterilization; many existing Roma settlements were liquidated, and the Roma culture and their identity were often officially denied.

Segregated Roma settlements became a problem especially after forced settlement of the Roma by means of various restrictions on their nomadic lifestyle. Since there was a lack of any systematic data, local agencies of the State Hygienic-epidemiological Authority conducted a field research in 1955, collecting data on 1,305 segregated Roma settlements that were inhabited by more than 95,000 Roma. A series of various restricted tools that were implemented afterwards was finalized in 1965 by approval of the Central Government of Czechoslovakia Decree on Liquidation of Gypsy Settlements and Dispersion of Gypsy Population. For comparison, the Statistical Office of Czechoslovakia conducted its own research in this field in 1967, and 1,223 segregated Roma settlements were identified on the territory of Slovakia (Jurová 1993). The main goal of the activity of the state authorities was the gradual assimilation of the Roma within the majority population, but it failed.

*Table 1: Development of number of the Roma on the territory of Slovakia  
(qualified estimations and official censuses)*

Year	1893	1921 <sup>1</sup>	1927	1930 <sup>1</sup>	1947	1970	1980	1989
Number	36,231	7,284	62,192	30,626	84,438	159,275	199,853	253,943
Year	1991 <sup>1</sup>	2001 <sup>2</sup>	2001 <sup>1</sup>	2004 <sup>3</sup>	2010 <sup>4</sup>	2011 <sup>1</sup>	2013 <sup>5</sup>	
Number	75,802	379,200	89,920	320,000	352,923	105,738	402,810	

Notes: relevant archives, qualified estimations, and censuses done by the state authorities, Horváthová (1964), Podolák (2000), Vaňo (2001)<sup>2</sup>, Jurásková (2004), USPVRK (2004)<sup>3</sup>, Radičová (2004), Mušinka et al. (2014)<sup>5</sup>. Data without indexes were achieved by means of special censuses (a method of imputed ethnicity was used in 1980)

<sup>1</sup> Data based on results of the official state censuses

<sup>4</sup> Qualified estimation: update of ‘Atlas of Roma Communities 2004’

The collapse of the Communist Party’s regime was accompanied by huge changes, and several groups were not ready for them. One of those groups was a group of marginalized members of the Roma minority who were not able to adapt to the new conditions in a proper way. Despite the democratisation of their position within the society and the creation of opportunities for cultural, social and political development, their main problem remained poverty and survival in a much more economically competitive environment. The unemployment rate of the Roma increased dramatically and, due to economic transformation, many Roma lost opportunities.

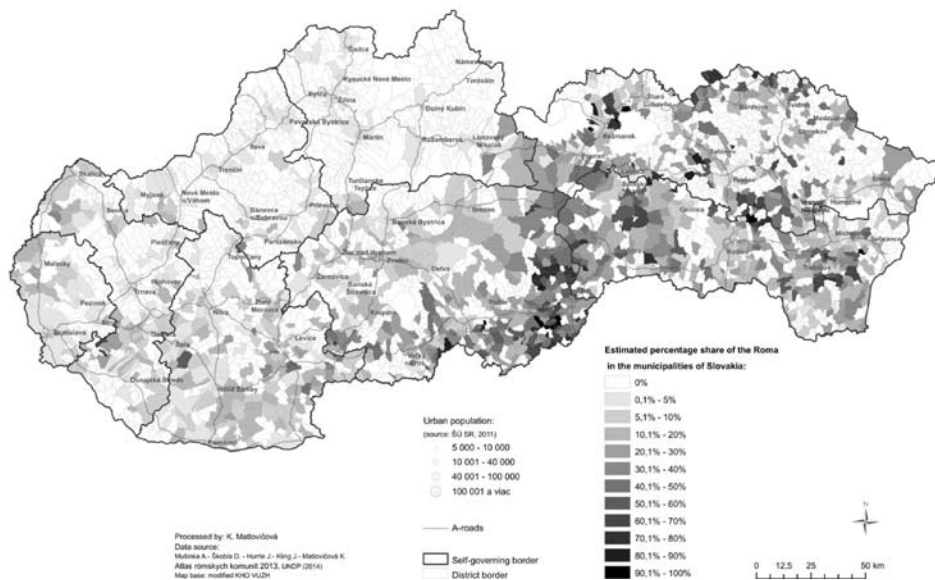


Figure 2: Estimated percentage share of the Roma in Slovak municipalities (Mušinka et al. 2014)

For an illustration of the present state of the Roma settlements in Slovakia, the publication *Atlas of Roma Communities* (Mušinka et al. 2014) is used (there are significant differences between expert estimations and the results of the official censuses; for an explanation, cf. Messing 2014). It is estimated that there are almost 403,000 Roma in Slovakia, which is around 7.4% of the overall population in Slovakia. The highest shares of the Roma on total regional populations are linked to the eastern and south-eastern regions that are the weakest in terms of their economic performance: the Košice Region, the Prešov Region and the Banská Bystrica Region (Klimovský 2010). As for the Roma settlements, the term, as defined by Jakoubek and Hirt (2008: 16–7), describes:

relatively autonomous social formations located in Slovak countryside inhabited primarily by the Roma population. The advantage of this term is based on its practicality and general use. Any attempts to introduce new terminology, either by the Slovak Government (e.g., dwelling formations on low socio-cultural level) or the scientific circles (e.g., cumulated Roma settlements) ended up as a failure and were not accepted neither by the general public nor the specialists.

Table 2: Spatial distribution of the Roma settlements in Slovakia (Mušinka et al. 2014)

Region	Number of concentrated Roma settlements located within the municipal residential areas	Number of concentrated Roma settlements located in the periphery of the municipal residential areas	Number of concentrated Roma settlements that are territorially segregated from the municipal residential areas	Overall number of concentrated Roma settlements	Number of the municipalities without concentrated Roma settlements	Number of the municipalities where no Roma live dispersed among the majority population
<b>Banská Bystrica</b>	51	40	51	142	173	5
<b>Bratislava</b>	7	9	3	19	10	1
<b>Košice</b>	52	102	76	230	86	41
<b>Nitra</b>	45	13	7	65	93	4
<b>Prešov</b>	46	128	80	254	47	95
<b>Trenčín</b>	6	5	2	13	30	0
<b>Trnava</b>	30	21	10	61	31	3
<b>Žilina</b>	9	6	4	19	15	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	246	324	233	803	485	150

The illegality of the Roma settlements is another sensitive issue in the relevant policy making. Many of the settlements were established after several forced activities of the state authorities, and the Roma communities did not choose the place. However, it is not rare that such settlements were declared illegal, especially after 1989. One interesting point is that illegality of such settlements was declared not only by the original owners (for instance those, who received back their real estate from the state after 1989) but also by the local governments that had assisted the state authorities to settle the Roma communities before 1989 (Jurová 2002b).

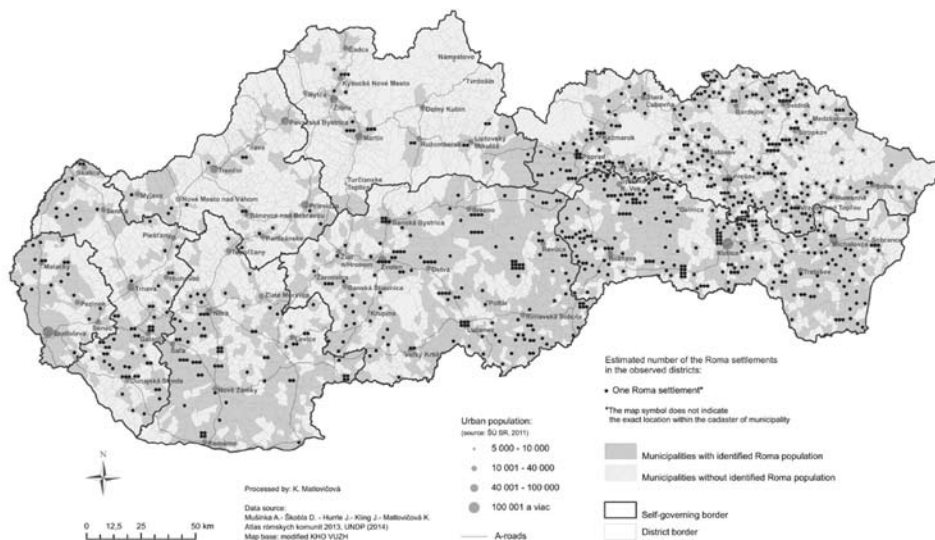


Figure 3: Estimated number of the Roma settlements in Slovak municipalities (Mušinka et al. 2014)

The spatial distribution of the Roma on the territory of Slovakia is significantly uneven (Figure 2, Figure 3, Table 2). The Roma communities are settled in various ways, and this fact causes serious complications in mapping. The Roma communities that contain the minimum of 30 persons have been identified in 1,070 municipalities. More than one half of these communities (ca. 54%) live in concentrated Roma settlements: 233 of them are territorially segregated from the municipal residential areas, 324 of them are located in the periphery of the municipal residential areas, and 246 of them are located within the municipal residential areas. An extreme case is a small town called Hnúšťa, where ten different concentrated Roma settlements are identified. The most usual case is the situation when only one concentrated Roma settlement is located in a municipality (there are 455 such municipalities in Slovakia). In spite of some stereotypes, almost half of the overall Roma population (around 46%) live dispersed among the majority population. There are clear regional differences in the Slovak regions in terms of the typology of the Roma settlements. For instance, while for the Banská Bystrica region the dispersed Roma communities among the majority population are typical, for the Košice region it is a model of territorially segregated Roma settlement from the municipal residential area that is typical. In addition, there is one more crucial fact: if the level of socio-economic development of the Roma settlements living in different regions is compared, poorly developed Roma settlements can be found in all regions (Mušinka et al. 2014).



## **The state's approach and its failure**

Despite the fact that Slovakia is a country in which the share of the Roma minority of the total population is quite significant, the Roma issue has been considered a problematic policy issue for many decades. The Roma minority is strongly differentiated from within. It includes a number of culturally diversified and disassociated complex sub-ethnic groups, including the Rumungri (the settled Roma), Vlačská Roma (the nomadic Roma), and the remnants of German Sinti. The Roma are also distinguished by the language and dialects that they use. An additional factor is a residual caste system that persists in the Roma community (Vašečka 1999). Last but not least, despite the fact that a high proportion of the Roma population suffers from high rates of poverty (including long-term unemployment), illiteracy, crime and severe disease, there are some Roma groups that are wealthy and influential.

However, this variety is not reflected in the central governments' policy approaches there. In contrast, the central governments have often implemented only the urgent policy tools required from the side of different international actors (e.g. OSCE, COE, and EU). Consequently, unsystematic approaches, policy experimentation that is too often accompanied by failures, political unwillingness to take the responsibility for this policy issue, and general helplessness of state administration have become features of various central governments' policies focused on the Roma in Slovakia. From this perspective, it is justified to ask whether other stakeholders have replaced the state's role in the field of anti-poverty policies linked to the marginalized Roma communities or whether the state is an exclusive decision maker in this field.

The collapse of the Communist Party's domination was associated with high expectations regarding the social, economic, and political transition. Although the old institutions were removed practically immediately, their replacement with a new institutional system was more problematic than trouble-free. For instance, an official equalisation of the Roma minority with the other national or ethnic minorities became reality as late as 1991. Despite this achievement, as emphasised by Dostál (1998), since the early 1990s the Roma population in Slovakia has not been fully integrated into mainstream social life and the differences in culture, lifestyle and values have led to considerable tensions with the majority population.

There are several persisting stereotypes, e.g. the Roma are criminals, they are lazy, they are illiterate, the majority of their children are mentally handicapped, they drain the state's resources by means of social policy tools, they are nonconformists and are unable to coexist with the majority population without social, political and cultural tensions, they live either in devastated flats or in some sort of shacks in segregated settlements (Cangár 2002; Vašečka 2002b). In addition, for the majority population, it is difficult to understand that education is of a low value for the Roma, sexual partnerships among members of broader Roma families are acceptable, etc. The stereotypes of the majority population's attitudes in regard to the Roma have been supported by several cases in which the majority population has considered members of the Roma minority guilty or worthless. For instance, the media paid great attention to the looting of some

Roma groups that occurred in 2004 in eastern Slovakia. Another typical example is the case from the mid-1990s when a visa requirement for Slovak citizens was introduced by the UK in response to an “exodus” of the Roma from Slovakia to these countries (Kusý 1999: 98). The last example of such a case is a recent one: In 2012, the roof of the Krásna Hôrka Castle was burned, and police investigation showed that some children from the local Roma community were responsible because they had been burning grass in the surrounding area of the castle and the sparks lit the roof. The children were minors, and thus they were not charged with any crime, but the majority population understood this situation very simplistically as: ‘The Gypsies set fire to a hallmark of the Slovak national heritage.’ Consequentially, it strengthened the position of right-wing extremists, because they cited “Gypsy criminality” and many members of the majority population supported them (latently at least).

Taking into account the abovementioned facts, it is no surprise that central governments usually dislike decision-making within policies relating to the Roma issue. Moreover, relevant decision-making processes are often influenced by the syndromes such as NIMBY<sup>4</sup>, LULU<sup>5</sup> or NIMTOO<sup>6</sup> (cf. Dear 1992; Freudenburg & Pastor 1992; Wexler 1996) as well as a blame-avoidance approach (cf. Weaver 1986).

At this point, it is important to show how the state fails. As has already been mentioned, the grant resources have been reallocated according to the quality of the submitted projects, and not according to the local state and local needs. Our sample includes 321 observations of municipalities where grants within Measures 2.1 and 2.2 of operational programme *Employment and social inclusion* were allocated between 2007 and 2013. Two data sources were used: data regarding the budgets of allocated funds were taken from the database of the Social Development Fund (2014); data describing the municipalities from the viewpoint of the Roma community characteristics were taken from the Atlas of Roma Communities in Slovakia 2013 (Mušinka et al. 2014). The database contained data on over 700 grants in over 350 municipalities. Projects to be implemented at regional and/or national levels were not taken into account. The data on allocated amounts at the local level were merged with the selected variables describing conditions of the Roma communities in the given municipalities. After merging the data sets, 321 observations with the complete data were used in the regression analysis.

As already mentioned, the total amount of grants allocated at a local level is the dependent (response) variable and ranges between €18,254 and €2,286,648 with a median of €64,495 and mean of €143,799 (which indicates strongly positively skewed distribution). The final allocated sum might differ from the one that was approved by the evaluation committee, but this will not affect the analysis, as the aim is to investigate the relationship between the sums approved by the decision-makers and a set of local characteristics.

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<sup>4</sup> Not-In-My-BackYard.

<sup>5</sup> Locally-Unwanted-Land-Use.

<sup>6</sup> Not-In-My-Term-Of-Office.

The basic descriptive statistics of the variables can be found in Table 3. All variables are significantly positively spatially auto-correlated (see Moran's I spatial autocorrelation coefficient in column (7) in Table 3). This indicates that similar values of a selected variable are clustered together on a map (or in other words similar values occur near one another).

*Table 3: Descriptive statistics*

Variable (1)	1st quartile (2)	Median (3)	Mean (4)	3 <sup>rd</sup> quartile (5)	S. D. (6)	Moran's I (7)
<b>Allocated sum (EUR)</b>	39 231.00	64 495.00	143 799.00	147 921.00	233 583.50	0.612***
<b>Pop</b>	815.00	1 681.00	7 092.00	4 089.00	18 514.83	0.240***
<b>Roma_pop (%)</b>	10.20	22.30	29.21	43.20	23.34	0.111***
<b>Casspit (%)</b>	8.00	40.00	42.53	80.00	23.34	0.048 •
<b>Sewerage (%)</b>	0.00	70.00	51.93	100.00	44.86	0.068*
<b>Km_school</b>	6.00	11.00	11.69	16.00	7.05	0.186***
<b>Km_gynaecologist</b>	0.00	6.00	7.41	12.00	7.81	0.093***
	YES (%)	NO (%)				
<b>District Seat</b>	15.26	84.74				
<b>Commission</b>	32.71	67.29				
<b>Social_work</b>	70.09	29.91				

Notes: 0\*\*\*, 0.001\*\*, 0.01\*, 0.05, [district\_seat] a dummy variable indicating whether the municipality is a district seat (reference value: 'no'), [pop] total population of the municipality, [Roma\_pop] percentage of the population with the Roma attributed ethnicity, [casspit] percentage of the population using cesspits, [sewerage] percentage of the population using public sewerage system, [km\_school] average distance to the closest elementary school for pupils with special needs, [km\_gynaecologist] average distance to the closest gynaecologist office, [commission] a dummy variable indicating whether a commission aimed at solving the Roma affairs exists in the municipality (reference value: 'yes'), [social\_work] a dummy variable indicating whether the municipality or a different body implements social work project in the municipality (reference value: 'yes').

In the proposed regression model the allocated amount in municipality  $i$  (denoted by  $y_i$ ) depends on allocated amounts in the neighbouring municipalities (as defined in spatial weight matrix  $\mathbf{W}$ ) captured by the spatial lag variable  $\mathbf{W}_i y$  where  $\mathbf{W}_i$  is the  $i^{\text{th}}$  row of the spatial weight matrix  $\mathbf{W}$ . It further depends on the own-municipality level of total population, percentage of the population with Roma attributed ethnicity, percentage of the population using cesspits, percentage of the population using public sewerage systems, average distance to the closest elementary gynaecologist office and a set of dummy variables indicating whether the municipality is a district seat, whether a commission aimed at solving the Roma affairs exists in the municipality, and whether the municipality or a different body implements social work projects in the municipality (given by  $i^{\text{th}}$  row of matrix  $\mathbf{X}$ ). It also depends on the same set of variables in the neighbouring municipalities represented by  $\mathbf{W}_i \mathbf{X}$ . Taking into account relationships

among neighbouring municipalities, a change of  $q^{\text{th}}$  variable in municipality  $i$  has not only the direct impact on allocated amount in this municipality but also the indirect impact on other municipalities  $j \neq i$ . The estimated model will be discussed in terms of direct, indirect and total impacts as proposed by LeSage and Pace (2009), and interpretation is followed by Fischer et al. (2010).

In order to discriminate between the unrestricted spatial Durbin model and spatial error model, i.e. between substantive and residual dependence, the likelihood ratio test is used, which rejects the null hypothesis of a spatial error model specification (test statistics: 49.32 with the corresponding p-value  $<0.0001$ ). The likelihood ratio test further rejects the null hypothesis of the first-order spatial autoregressive (SAR) model specification (test statistics: 25.55 with the corresponding p-value 0.0024). This supports the assumption that spatial externalities are substantive rather than random. The estimated spatial autoregressive parameter ( $\text{Rho} = 0.3913$ ) provides evidence for significant spatial effects working through the dependent variable. A variance inflation factor measure was used to check for possible multicollinearity in the model. The Breusch-Pagan test for heteroscedasticity in spatial models and LM test for residual autocorrelation were performed; both tests indicate a violation of assumptions, and hence robust standard errors<sup>7</sup> are also reported (column (4) in Table 4).

Table 4 shows that three non-spatially lagged explanatory variables (total population, percentage of the Roma population, and a dummy variable for social work implementation project) and two spatially lagged explanatory variables (total population and a dummy variable for social work implementation project) are statistically significant. Quantification of explanatory variables impacts in spatial econometric models are based on average direct,<sup>8</sup> indirect,<sup>9</sup> and total effects<sup>10</sup> (LeSage & Pace 2009; Fischer & Wang 2011); therefore, we do not interpret the coefficient estimates.

As could be expected, the total population has statistically significant positive average direct, indirect and total effects on the allocated amount, as larger municipalities have better capacities to prepare and submit grant proposals. A similar percentage of the Roma population has statistically significant positive effects on the allocated amount, which would also be anticipated.

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<sup>7</sup> Heteroscedasticity and autocorrelation consistent estimation of the covariance matrix of the coefficient estimates as proposed by Zeileis (2004) is used.

<sup>8</sup> *Average direct impacts* or, in other words, the impact of changes in the  $i^{\text{th}}$  observation of  $x_q$ , denoted as  $x_{iq}$ , on  $y_i$  is similar in spirit to typical regression coefficient interpretations. The direct impacts include feedback influences arising as a result of impacts passing through the neighbours, and back to the observation itself.

<sup>9</sup> *Average indirect impacts* represent the total impact on individual observation  $y_i$  resulting from changing the  $q^{\text{th}}$  explanatory variable by the same amount across all  $n$  observations. On the other hand, average indirect effects also represent impacts to the observation, i.e. how changes in all observations influence a single observation  $i$ .

<sup>10</sup> Average total impacts are represented by the sum of average direct effects and average indirect effects and reflect how a one-percent change of  $q^{\text{th}}$  explanatory variable in all regions influences the dependent variable in a typical (average) region.

Table 4: Estimated coefficients and impacts

Variable	Coefficients	Standard errors		Impacts		
		Assympt.	Robust	Direct	Indirect	Total
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
<b>Intercept</b>	1.3228	1.2039	1.3626			
<b>district_seat = YES</b>	0.0462	0.1560	0.1749	0.0660	0.5149	0.5810
<b>log(pop)</b>	0.2718***	0.0533	0.0520	0.2958***	0.6227***	0.9185***
<b>log(Roma_pop)</b>	0.2012***	0.0474	0.0568	0.2142***	0.3375 •	0.5517**
<b>Cesspit</b>	-0.0008	0.0016	0.0017	-0.0008	0.0019	0.0011
<b>sewerage</b>	0.0010	0.0013	0.0014	0.0010	0.0012	0.0022
<b>km_school</b>	0.0087	0.0057	0.0053	0.0088	0.0035	0.0123
<b>km_gynaecologist</b>	-0.0032	0.0057	0.0047	-0.0032	0.0004	-0.0028
<b>commission = NO</b>	-0.0087	0.0734	0.0739	0.0035	0.3180	0.3215
<b>social_work = NO</b>	0.2113*	0.0829	0.1004	0.1927*	-0.4826 •	-0.2898
<b>W * district_seat = YES</b>	0.3074	0.2989	0.2721			
<b>W * log(pop)</b>	0.2873*	0.1199	0.1259			
<b>W * log(Roma_pop)</b>	0.1346	0.1175	0.1248			
<b>W * cesspit</b>	0.0015	0.0037	0.0036			
<b>W * sewerage</b>	0.0004	0.0029	0.0030			
<b>W * km_school</b>	-0.0012	0.0111	0.0131			
<b>W * km_gynaecologist</b>	0.0015	0.0131	0.0146			
<b>W * commission = NO</b>	0.2044	0.1728	0.1845			
<b>W * social_work = NO</b>	-0.3877*	0.1755	0.1778			
<b>Number of observations</b>	321					
<b>Nagelkerke pseudo R<sup>2</sup></b>	0.5900					
<b>Rho</b>	0.3913***					
<b>LM test for residual autocorrelation</b>	16.0090***					
<b>Breusch-Pagan test</b>	32.7173*					
<b>Studentized Breusch-Pagan test</b>	30.5812*					

Notes: 0\*\*\*, 0.001\*\*, 0.01\*, 0.05•

From the viewpoint of the research question, i.e. to what extent the allocation of funds at a local level reflects the living conditions of the poor Roma people, only the implementation of social work projects at the municipal level is in statistically significant relationship with the allocation of grants. The average direct impacts are positive, i.e. the data describing Roma communities were collected in 2013 (Mušinka et al. 2014), and grant resources were allocated between 2007 and 2013, and social work implementation projects were the most frequent objectives within the investigated measures. These findings only support this fact. In contrast, average indirect effects are negative, which is more interesting. If a social work project is implemented in a certain municipality, neighbouring municipalities receive on average smaller funds, or if social work projects are implemented in neighbouring municipalities, the municipality of interest receives smaller funds on average.

## **Local governments, NGOs, and the Roma settlements: positive examples**

The fundamental function of state social transfers (e.g. subsidies for those who are in material need) is not to improve the existing condition of recipients; this only leads to a status quo situation. Instead, improvement potential is linked to the grant resources, but (as shown in the previous section) their reallocation does not reflect local needs. From this perspective, it is not surprising that improvement was achieved especially in cases in which the state was replaced or significantly supported at least by some other stakeholder in its leading role. This replacement is usually performed either by relevant local government/s or by NGO/s.

Most of the local governments in Slovakia tend to use one of the following strategies in regard to the so-called Roma problem: 1) strategy of wall; 2) strategy of misusing the situation; 3) strategy of “normalization” of the problem; 4) strategy of external assistance; 5) strategy of internal resolution (Vašečka 2002b). While the first three types of the mentioned strategies usually lead to unwanted outcomes (such as deepening of segregation, breaking the ethical or even legal rules, becoming resigned to and tolerating the existing state), deciding not to decide (the fourth and fifth types) is linked with potential to bring mainly positive outcomes. Obviously, there are also some risks in the cases of these two strategies, for instance, overly high dependency on external resources, changes in policy goals or priorities, limits of own resources, etc. However, at this point, two cases of good practice that show rather positive impacts of these two strategies shall be represented.

The strategy of external assistance can be demonstrated with the example of Program Healthy Communities. Three NGOs (Association for Culture, Education and Communication, Association of Field Health Assistants, and Slovak Association of General Practitioners for Adults) interconnected their capacities as well as activities within a Platform for Support of the Health of Disadvantaged Groups in 2012 in order to implement the abovementioned program. The main goal of this platform is the implementation of a complex model supporting the improvement of the health of persons living in segregated communities. In practice, 108 health assistants and 12 field coordinators were employed in more than one hundred localities settled by the Roma communities. Financial resources for this activity were also allocated externally. They were provided by the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Republic for Roma Communities.

The municipality of Spišský Hrhov is one of the best examples of utilisation of the strategy of internal resolution. Approximately 300 persons out of ca. 1,300 inhabitants of Spišský Hrhov belong to the local Roma community. A comprehensive and systematic policymaking that is experienced by the local government in Spišský Hrhov is based on the active involvement of all stakeholders, including those located outside the municipality. The local government started to call for cooperation within elaboration on a local development program. In other words, various stakeholders had an opportunity to present their priorities and interests, and to negotiate with the others. In the end, the

program consisted of complex analysis, exact policy agenda, a list of policy tools with plans for their implementation, necessary resources and expected outcomes. The local government was also cooperating with experienced NGOs, schools and other (especially neighbouring) local governments as well as relevant regional government, entered a few networks and partnerships, invested in human resources and social work, and other fields. A continual evaluation of achieved outcomes and consequential updating of the program was introduced, and this approach has led to higher effectiveness. From the perspective of the Roma community that lives in Spišský Hrhov, the involvement of their representatives into entire policy making was the crucial element.

Obviously, there are cases in which the driver is an NGO rather than relevant local government/s. On this matter, it is proper to mention a comprehensive approach of ETP Slovakia that facilitates inter-sector partnerships in order to achieve desired results. ETP Slovakia is one of the biggest non-profit consulting and training organization working primarily in the marginalized Roma communities in Slovakia since the end of the 1990s. It has already cooperated with different local governments, entrepreneurs and other NGOs in providing comprehensive, integrated social services, enhancing financial literacy and informal education of adults, children and young people. Since 2001, its activities have been implemented through a network of ten community centres in selected municipalities. The systematic approach of the NGO includes providing comprehensive consulting services (social, legal, health, labour, housing and financial); micro-loan and savings programs, housing microloans, financial education, kindergartens, after-school activities; mentoring, tutoring, vocational, health awareness raising, home renovation and cultural activities and programs.

In particular, the implementation of its microsaving<sup>11</sup> and microloan<sup>12</sup> programs has improved living conditions of hundreds of Roma families since 2006. At this time, ETP Slovakia implements an innovative program of housing for young families from marginalized Roma communities. The program is sustainable and effective, as Roma from segregated communities who often live in poorly constructed shacks without access to drinking water, electricity and sewerage are able to build simple and decent houses utilizing self-help. The construction of houses is divided into three phases. The basic model (25 m<sup>2</sup>.) includes hygienic unit, kitchen, living room and space for sleeping on the first floor. It is easily possible to expand the house to 37.5 m<sup>2</sup> and obtain an additional

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<sup>11</sup> Typical assets saved for include a driving license, purchasing a home computer, home purchase, repair or extension, e.g. building a bathroom/kitchen, or starting a small business. The participants are expected to demonstrate that they can both generate income and save some of it. Participants are requested to enter into an agreement (a contract of personal responsibility) whereby they follow the recommendations of ETP Slovakia's local social field workers relating to the welfare of the clients' families generally. Clients have to open their own savings account and deposit a certain agreed amount of money each month. All participants receive personal money management counselling, and, if applicable, assistance in purchasing a home or starting a small business. The greatest benefit of the program is that the participants take an active part in it, and achieve their asset goals through their own efforts. Participants receive financial education that could reduce their economic disenfranchisement and dependency, and increase their knowledge of money management and legal issues.

<sup>12</sup> The microloan fund provides families with low income housing microloans. Microloans are conditioned by a set of criteria and beneficiaries of microloans usually successfully finished the saving program.

room. The emphasis is on the use of ecological materials, which are simultaneously the most economical. The simple construction system enables the impoverished Roma to build their homes on their own (or together with their relatives). Financial resources (on average €6,000) for the impoverished Roma are granted as an interest-free loan from ETP Slovakia Housing Microloan Fund, which has been financially supported by the non-profit organization Habitat for Humanity International. The maturity of microloans is eight to ten years.

## **Discussion and conclusion**

Considerable amounts of money are spent by the EU, national, and local governments in order to improve living conditions of the impoverished Roma every year, but the outcomes are questionable. Even if the projects fulfil all formal criteria, and resources are spent in accordance with the law, the money tends not to be used where it is needed the most, which has also been proven by our research: the findings indicate that there is no statistically significant relationship among allocation of grants and characteristics describing Roma's access to basic infrastructure, education, healthcare and institutional approach to solving the so-called 'Roma problem' at a local level. The quality of projects is evaluated according to the given set of criteria which does not necessarily lead to the allocation of funds to the municipalities with the worst living conditions of the Roma people.

Our findings are in accordance with the findings of Hurrell et al. (2012) who argue that the measures do not reach those most in need, that the chance to benefit from the ESF support is positively correlated with the size of the municipality, and that only a small proportion of projects is located in the most segregated and underdeveloped localities. However, it may be concluded that the current setting does not allow robust outcome evaluation of the ESF projects. The idea of the impossibility proper evaluation is also intimated by the European Commission (2011) report considering a number of problematic areas (such as no formal requirement to report data exclusively on the Roma; a lack of aggregation at program level on the outcomes achieved through the ESF support to the Roma; projects tend to concentrate on outputs rather than on real achievements; or a general lack of evaluation materials).

In the late 1990s, the central government appointed a plenipotentiary who is focused on the Roma issues. However, the conditions in the majority of existing Roma settlements have not been improved, and this fact was repeatedly "used" by the central governments in order to avoid the blame and failure in this field. Moreover, in spite of a positive experience linked to the cases mentioned in the previous part, a high number of failures have been experienced by the local governments as well as the NGOs, and therefore their involvement cannot be considered a "magic cure-all". Policy making related to the Roma settlements is very often influenced by NIMBYs, LULUs, and NIMTOOs. The local politicians are especially sensitive in the case of any Roma settlement and even tools like local referenda or public hearings are sometimes misused in order to "decide in compliance with the wishes of citizens". A perfect case of such misuse, as well as the NIMBY and LULU syndromes, is the case of the segregated Roma settlement in Letanovce (Klimovský 2008b). A serious situation occurred in Spišské Podhradie, a



small town with a high concentration of Roma, in 1993. The mayor signed a decree which denied *inter alia* the Roma certain basic rights. Although the decree was abolished before it could go into effect (because it had been found to be unconstitutional), there was no doubt that there would be more mayors who agreed with its content and wished to implement it, if it had not been found unconstitutional. Furthermore, although the problem with the segregated Roma settlements looks like the problem of rural areas, in particular, the reality is different. For instance, Košice, the second biggest city situated in the eastern part of Slovakia, has not been able to solve the situation with a city ghetto of the Roma for dozens of years. The Roma ghetto in Košice is called Luník IX (Luník IX is an independent city district with its own self-government institutions) and nowadays, it is a “no go area” (Bauman 1995), specifically a “no go in area” for outsiders, but simultaneously a “no go out” area for its inhabitants. In other words, it is possible to point out that segregation, in this case, is social rather than territorial.

Probably the most serious failure of the majority of the central governments was a concentration on impacts of the Roma lifestyle instead of on its reasons (Mušinka 2002). A set of problems linked to the existence of the Roma settlements (incl. poverty, social exclusion, etc.) seems to be a modern “Gordian knot” for the central governments in Slovakia. Therefore, it is necessary to foster research in this field, and the central governments as well as other stakeholders should follow the findings. Nevertheless, as shown in our analysis, their mutual collaboration, and joint activities may be crucial determinants of positive impacts.

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## **Povzetek**

Po uradnih popisih je na Slovaškem približno 90.000 Romov, strokovnjaki njihovo število ocenjujejo med 350.000 in 500.000. Različne mednarodne organizacije in institucije so pred kratkim ugotovile, da je na Slovaškem močno razširjena diskriminacija Romov na področju zaposlovanja, izobraževanja, zdravstvenih storitev, stanovanj in posojilnih praks. Veliko njihovih naselij nima formalne infrastrukture, dostopa do pitne vode ali ustrezne kanalizacije. Revščina je med Romi zelo velika in država ni bila uspešna pri izvajanju svojih uradnih politik boja proti revščini. Zaradi tega so na tem področju postali veliko bolj pomembni drugi deležniki, zlasti lokalne oblasti in nevladne organizacije. Glavno raziskovalno vprašanje je, ali so drugi deležniki dejansko nadomestili državo na področju politike boja proti revščini, povezani z marginaliziranimi romskimi skupnostmi. Ob upoštevanju nedavnega razvoja in trenutnega stanja domnevamo, da so tako nevladne organizacije kot lokalne oblasti na tem področju v veliki meri nadomestile državo, pa tudi, da so njihovi pristopi zelo drugačni, zaradi česar so z vidika učinka zelo drugačni tudi rezultati. Za raziskovalne namene smo uporabili tako kvantitativne podatke (pridobljene od različnih organov, pa tudi s pomočjo terenske raziskave) kot tudi kvalitativne podatke (npr. vsebinsko analizo različnih strateških dokumentov in izvedenih projektov). Poleg analize, ki temelji na kvantitativnih podatkih, članek vsebuje nekaj primerov, ki nudijo podporo razlagi kvantitativnih podatkov in izpostavljajo primere ustreznih in neustreznih praks.

**Ključne besede:** Romi, Slovaška, romska naselja, revščina, politika boja proti revščini, lokalne vlade, nevladne organizacije

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